DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 032 535 AL 002 094

By-Wolfram, Walter A.

Social Dialects from a Linguistic Perspective: Assumptions, Current Research, and Future Directions.

Pub Date Oct 69

Note-57p.; Paper presented at the Center for Applied Linguistics Conference on Approaches to Social Dialects, Washington, D.C., October 31 to November 1, 1969.

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$2.95

Descriptors-Descriptive Linguistics, *Dialect Studies, Linguistic Theory, *Negro Dialects, *Nonstandard Dialects, Research Needs, *Social Dialects, *Sociolinguistics, Surveys

This paper begins with a discussion of the assumptions basic to the study of both language and social dialects: verbal systems are arbitrary, all languages or dialects are adequate as communicative systems, they are systematic and ordered and learned in the context of the community. A survey of current work and findings in dialect studies follows. In the last part of the paper, the author discusses research needs in the areas of (1) field techniques (size of sample necessary for a reliable study of social dialects; role of race, sex, and social class of the fieldworker in affecting the speech of an informant; elicitation procedures which can get at judgments of the grammaticality of nonstandard structures apart from judgments about social acceptability; and importance of statistical calculations in comparing the various quantitative measurements that are made), (2) descriptive studies (intonation, Black English in the South, nonstandard white dialects, age-grading, acquisitional studies of nonstandard dialects, and more descriptive date on the role of sex in language), and (3) theoretical issues (way in which observed linguistic variation can be accounted for in a linguistic model of description, extent to which a description can encompass more than one idiolect, and descriptive differences between several types of language situations). (DO)

EDO 32535

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Walter A. Wolfram
Center for Applied Linguistics
October, 1969

# SOCIAL DIALECTS FROM A LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE: ASSUMPTIONS, CURRENT RESEARCH, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS *

## I

## Linguistic Assumptions

The research assumptions of linguistics in relation to the study of social dialects are derived from the anthropological tradition of cultural relativism.[1] When anthropologists at the turn of the century reacted to the evaluative measures of their predecessors in describing non-western cultures, they set the stage for a similar view of language differences. American anthropologists such as Boas, Kroeber, and Herskovitz insisted on viewing cultures descriptively rather than by some yardstick of evolutionary development. Such an approach precluded classifying a language as "underdeveloped", "primitive" or inherently inferior simply because it was used in a culture devoid of the technological implements found in western civilization: the notion of "primitive" languages was denounced as a product of ethnocentrism by socially and technologically superordinate cultures.

Descriptive linguists, then, simply adopted the same assumptions about language that anthropologists had maintained for non-linguistic aspects of cultural behavior. Even as anthropologists rejected the Procrustean mold of western civilization in describing other cultures,

1. This is not to say that there is unanimous agreement among anthropologists about the extent to which cultural relativity is a philosophical, descriptive or methodological prerequisite for anthropological study. For an explication of some of the controversy concerning cultural relativity, see Schmidt (1955).

*Paper to be presented at the Center for Applied Linguistics Conference on Approaches to Social Dialects, October 31--November 1, 1969, Washington, D.C.

AL 002 094

linguistic descriptions rejected the mold of the classical languages in describing non-Indo-European languages. The opinion that languages have many different ways of expressing "underlying" logical operations became the cornerstone of assumptions about language differences. At first, these assumptions were relevant mainly to languages compared across clear-cut cultures; later they became relevant to the comparisons of speech differences for different social levels (subcultures, if you will) within the framework of a larger culture. It is within the latter framework that we shall discuss the basic assumptions conerning social dialects in their relation to standard English.

What then, is the explicit nature of these assumptions? In order to discuss these assumptions, we must begin with the primitive assumptions linguists accept in their definition of LANGUAGE.

One of the basic premises about the nature of language is that verbal systems are arbitrary, established only by convention.[2] Although one cannot deny a certain degree of consistency in the relation of language to the outside world, relationships between objects and linguistic signs are arbitrary. All languages are equally capable of conceptualization and expressing logical propositions, but the particular mode (i.e. grammar) for conceptualizing may differ drastically between language systems. The linguist, therefore, assumes that different surface forms for expression have nothing to do with the underlying logic of a

2. Nida (1964:47) notes that the arbitrary character of linguistic symbols refers to: (1) the arbitrary relationship between the form of the symbol and the form of the referent (2) the relationships between classes of symbols and classes of referents and (3) the relationship between classes of symbols and classes of symbols.

sentence. There is nothing inherent in a given language variety which will interfere with the development of conceptualization.[3] This is not to say that differences between the handling of logical operations may never correlate with different social classes; however, on the basis of this premise, it cannot be related to language differences, since all language varieties adequately provide for expression of syllogistic reasoning.

To those familar with the current interest in nonstandard English, particularly Black English, it should be apparent that this assumption does not coincide with the conclusions of some of the current projects in the area. To suggest that Black English imposes certain cognitive limitations on the logical operations of the Black English speaker and to reject it as "illogical" is not generally taken seriously by linguists. Yet, the work of Bereiter and Englemann, (1965,1966) proposes such a view. Ultimately, such notions seem to be derived for a prescriptive norm for language usage, although philosophical dictums about the logical nature of certain rules of a language add a ring of authority to such pronouncements.

To illustrate, one of the most cited examples of the inherent logical foundation of standard English is the use of negatives with indefinites. If a person uses a sentence such as John didn't do anything, it is

---

3. One should be careful to note the distinction between "interference in conceptual development" and the Whorfian hypothesis, which maintains that language categories predetermine particular conceptualizations of the external world. In the former case a value judgement is place on the adequacy of conceptualization, while the latter, no value judgment is made.

understood negatively, but if a person should use the sentence, John didn't do nothing, it can only be meant as a positive statement since two negatives logically make a positive.[4] In this view, if a person uses the construction in a sentence such as John didn't do nothing because he was so lazy, he is using English in an illogical way. Therefore the sentence does not mean what the speaker thought it meant. The speaker apparently means that John did not work, but by saying John didn't do nothing he affirms that John actually did something. Interpretations of this sort ignore a quite regular rule in Black English (as well as in languages such as Spanish and Italian) which states that when you have a negative sentence with indefinites, you may add a negative element to every indefinite (e.g., We ain't never had no trouble about none of us pullin' out no knife or nothin'). In the underlying structure there is only one negative, which is simply realized on every indefinite.

Essential to understanding the underlying proposition of the above sentence is the distinction between "deep" and "surface" structure in language.[5] Deep structure is basically a system of propositions which

---

4. This sentence could, of course, be interpreted positively in a context such as He didn't do just nothing; he was always busy. Usually, however, there is a strong stress on nothing to indicate this intention.

5. Although the notion of deep and surface structure in modern linguistics derived from the insights of transformztional-generative grammar, any generative model of language will be characterized by the recognition of this dichotomy. For example, this notion is implicit in stratificational grammar, although the series of steps (i.e. how many levels) and the mode for relating levels (how one gets from one level to another) may differ significantly from transformational-generative grammar.

interrelate in such a way as to express the meaning of the sentence, while surface structure is realization of these propositions in terms of the particular grammatical devices (e.g. linear ordering, grammatical categories) of the language. The knowledge of language involves the ability to assign deep and surface structures to an infinte range of sentences, to relate these structures appropriately, and to assign a semantic interpretation and phonetic interpretation to the paired deep and surface structure. The failure to understand this relation is, no doubt, responsible for some of the misinterpretation of nonstandard varieties of languages. We see, in the case of Black English multiple negation, that the basis for arguing that it is not logical is found in the mistaken identity of a surface structure for a deep structure.

Proclamations about the inadequacy of Black English as a nonstandard language variety on logical bases, from a linguistic perspective, are attributed to a naive disregard for one of the primitive premises about the nature of language. Yet, Bereiter maintains that a difference between the negative patterns of Black English and standard English is an indication that the black ghetto child is "deprived of one of the most powerful logical tools our language provides." (1965:199) Bereiter claims that a black ghetto child "does not know the word not" since his subjects did not regularly give him the form in negating a sentence such as This is not a book. The assumptions of Bereiter, however, reveal two misconceptions. In the first place, he has confused the inability of the student to give him the word not in a specific elicitation task with the child's unfamiliarity with the lexical item. Labov (1969),

observes that many of the formal elicitation procedures in the context of a classroom can be quite intimidating to the student and the best defense may be no verbal response at all. Intensive research on the structure of Black English in Washington, D.C. and Detroit clearly indicates that not is an integral part of Black English. Secondly, Bereiter is apparently unaware that the use other negative patterns may serve the same purpose as not. Thus, a sentence such as This ain't no book may communicate the same negative pattern as not although the structure of the sentence is different. What is essential is not the occurrence of a particular lexical item, or a specific syntactical pattern, but the realization of a particular type of underlying structure involving negation. Whatever deficiencies in logical operations may or may not exist among black ghetto children, these have nothing to do with language.[6]

A second assumption of the linguist is the adequacy of all languages or dialects as communicative systems. It is accepted as a given, that language is a human phenomenon which characterizes every social group, and that all language systems are perfectly adequate as communicative systems for the members of the social group. The social acceptability of a particular language variety (considered the nonstandard variety because it is associated with a subordinate social group) is totally unrelated to its adequacy for communication. The question concerning different language varieties is not the WHAT but the HOW of communication. Thus, the consideration of the so-called disadvantaged child as "non-verbal", "verbally destitute", or at best, "drastically deficient" in

6. It is interesting to note that a sample of language indices Bereiter cites as indicative of language competence (1965:199-200) have nothing to do with language. He consistently confuses the recognition of logical operations with language development.

his speech is diametically opposed to this basic assumption. That there are typical situations in which young children do not respond because of the uncomfortableness of the social situation, or as a protective device against middle class meddling, should not be interpreted as meaning that the child lives in a verbally destitute environment, or even that the child does not emphasize the importance of verbal manipulation (See Labov 1969). For example, Shuy, Fasold and Wolfram recently conducted interviews with 45 Puerto Rican and Negro boys from Harlem, ranging in age from 13-17. The school records of the boys in English would no doubt indicate that their writing and oral expression are far below the middle class standard. But consider their responses on a sentence completion drill designed to get at certain indigenous cultural values. As part of this drill they were asked to complete the sentence with what they considered the most appropriate reply -- not in terms school expectation, but with a culturally appropriate solution. Thus, given the sentence "If you wanna be hip with the girls, you gotta _____, the vast majority of the respondents replied without hesitation, you gotta rap to her, or you gotta have a good rap. Rapping, in black ghetto culture, refers to a distinctively fluent and lively way of talking, characterized by a high degree of personal style (See Kochman 1968:27). Linguists therefore assume that the label "verbal destitution" cannot refer to vernacular language patterns, but only to non-indigenous social situations which create such an expression.

Some linguists, following Chomsky (1965), would assume the communicative adequacy of any language or language variety on the basis of an innate "universal" grammar (i.e. it is a putative attribute of being human). This innate language propensity involves the following

properties, according to Chomsky (1965:30):

(i) a technique for representing input signals

(ii) a way of representing structural information about these signals

(iii) some initial delimitation of a class of possible hypotheses about language structure

(iv) a method for determining what each hypothesis implies with respect to each sentence

(v) a method for selecting one of the (presumably infinitely many) hypotheses that are allowed by (iii) and are compatible with the given primary linguistic data.

Other linguists, following the behavioralist tradition explicated by Skinner (1957), insist that the acquisition of language must be attributed to a stimulus-response relationship rather than an innate universal grammar. From the perspective, the adequacy of language systems would be assumed on the basis of cross-cultural comparisons. That is, the postulate about the communicative adequacy of languages is derived inductively, based on the empirical data from a representative sample of world languages. Both approaches, then, would make the same claim about the adequacy of language systems. Although both approaches arrive at the same conclusion with respect to this issue, there is one important implication which should be brought out. Chomsky's perspective assumes that any normal child will have the equipment to deal with the logical operations underlying language--it is an attribute of the human mind (See Chomsky 1968). But it is possible, given the behavioralist perspective, that a particular type of environment might inhibit the acquisition of these logical properties necessary for an adequate language system.

The question of adequacy of nonstandard dialects as a communicative systems brings out a very important matter on how one views a nonstandard

language variety. In actuality, it is much broader than the linguistic situation, reverting back to the basic approach to different social groups. One can, for example, view black ghetto culture and language in terms of two basic models, which Baratz (1968) has called a deficit model or a difference model.[7] A deficit model treats speech differences in terms of a norm and deviation from that norm, the norm being middle class white behavior. From a sociological perspective, this means that much of black ghetto behavior, such as matrifocal homes, is viewed as a pathology. In terms of speech behavior, Black English is considered, in the words of Hurst, (1965:2) "the pathology of non-organic speech deficiencies". On the other hand, a difference model, which seems to be much more common to anthropology than sociology and psychology, considers socially subordinate societies and language varieties as self-contained systems, inherently neither deficient nor superior.

Although this dichotomy between a deficit and difference model may be somewhat oversimplified, it sets a helpful framework for theoretical approaches to nonstandard dialects. But there is also a practical importance for such a distinction. If, for example, one simply considers nonstandard dialects to be corrupt approximations of standard English, one may miss important structural facts about the nature of these dialects. For example, consider the following interpretation of the finite use of the form be, a commonly cited feature of Black English. Ruth Golden, who views Black English in terms of a descending scale of

7. The different models for describing nonstandard dialects were originally explicated by Cazden (1966).

deviation from standard English states:

> Individuals use different levels of language for different situations. These levels vary from the illiterate to the formal and literary. For instance, starting with the illiterate, He don't be here, we might progress to the colloquial, He ain't here, to the general and informal He isn't here up to the formal and literary, He is not present. (1963:173).

From the perspective of a deficit model, be, is simply considered a corrupt approximation of standard English. The possibility that be may have a grammatically different function is precluded. Instead, it is only considered as a "substitution" for the finite forms of standard English am, is and are. The linguist however, looks at this use of be descriptively; that is, he asks what the grammatical function of this form is regardless of its social consequences. When such an approach is taken, we find that the form be represents a grammatical category which seems to be unique to Black English. This, of course, is not to say that all linguists will accept a given descriptive analysis of this form (See Wolfram 1969:188-196) although a number of analyses agree that it is used to represent an habitual action of some type. This type of disagreement is no more serious than the disagreements that linguists may have over the function of the have auxiliary in standard English. Common to each description of be, however, is the rigorous method of linguistic analysis and the assumption that this form has a linguistic function in its own right. The insistence of language varieties as systems in their own right (with both similarities and

differences to related varieties) is the reason that linguists look with suspicion when they see such terms as "substitutions", "replacements", "omissions", "deviations", etc. Such terms used with reference to nonstandard language varieties imply a value judgement about a given variety's relation to the standard variety. Terms like "correspondence" and "alternation" do not have these same implications -- they are statements of fact about language relations. While the terminology may seem to be a trivial matter for the linguist to pick on, the association of such terms with the deficit type of approach raises a danger signal to the linguist. To take the position that nonstandard constructions are simply inaccurate and unworthy approximations of standard English can only lead to an inaccurate descriptions of what is assumed to be a self-contained system, which is perfectly adequate for communication.[8]

Our previous point concerning the adequacy of nonstandard varieties of English as a system of communication naturally leads us to our next premise concerning language, namely, that it is systematic and ordered. Any view of language differences which treats them as unsystematic and irregular will thus be categorically rejected by the linguist. It is

---

8. In terms of sociolinguistic situations, it is quite common for a socially dominant culture to view a socially subordinate one as having an inadequate means of communication. This view is a common manifestation of linguistic ethnocentrism of the dominant classes. Thus, Spanish-speaking South Americans often consider the Indian peasants to have no valid language system--verbally destitute. The current treatment of nonstandard English varieties no different, although it may be more subtle because Americans have sometimes denied the sociological facts concerning the subordinate role of some segments of the population in American society.

assumed that descriptive data of related languages will always reveal regular and systematic correspondences between different types constructions. One can readily see, then, why the linguist reacts negatively to a view of nonstandard language as that offerred by Hurst, who subsumes differences between Black English and standard English under the rubric "dialectolalia":

> ...dialectolalia involves such specific oral abberations as phonemic and subphonemic replacements, segmental phonemes, phonetic distortions, defective syntax, misarticulations, mispronunciations, limited or poor vocabulary, and faulty phonology. These variables exist most commonly in unsystematic, multifarious combinations. (1965:2)

The above position unambiguously treats Black English as an irregular, unsystematic and faulty rather than a different but equal system. Furthermore, such a position can only be taken when actual descriptive and sociolinguistic facts are ignored, for the linguist would claim that all evidence points to differences between standard English and Black English which are systematic and regular. Take, for example, the case of word-final consonant clusters in such words as test, ground, and cold. In Black English, the final consonant is regularly absent, the result of a systematic correspondence of a single consonant in Black English where a cluster is found in standard English. Thus, we get tes', groun', and col' in Black English. But these final consonants are not absent randomly or unsystematically. We observe that the correspondence of a single consonant for a word-final cluster only occurs when both members of a potential cluster are

either voiced or voiceless, such as st, nd, sk, and ld. But when one of the members is voiced and the other voiceless, as in the clusters mp (jump), lt (colt) and nt (count), this correspondence does not occur. Instead, Black English is like standard English in that both members of the cluster are present. The view that differences between related language varieties are random and haphazard is dangerous not only because it conflicts with a linguistic assumption but also from a practical viewpoint. It can lead to an unsystematic approach in teaching standard English and the teaching of points that may be irrelevant in terms of the systematic differences between the two language varieties.

As a final premise of the linguist, we must observe that language is learned in the context of the community. Linguists generally agree that children have a fairly complete language system by the age of 5 or 6, with minor adjustments in language competence occurring sometimes until 8 or 9. This system is acquired from contact with individuals in their environment. Whether this is primarily the parent-child relationship (which some claim for the middle class white community) or from child peers (which is sometimes claimed for the black ghetto community) their language is acquired through verbal interaction with individuals in the immediate context. Whether one maintains that the child has the innate capacity to search for abstract grammatical rules from which sentences are generated (a la Chomsky) or one insists on a behavioralist perspective ( a la Skinner), it is presumed that the child will have established an overall language competence by the age of 4-6. The rate of development is generally assumed to be parallel for children of different social groups (see Slobin 1967 for an actual

investigation of this question), lower class children learning the nonstandard dialect at approximately the same rate as middle class children learning the standard variety of English. This assumption of the linguist concerning the rate of language development again comes into basic conflict with basic statements of educational psychologists such as Engelmann, Bereiter and Deutsch, who speak of the communal "language retardation" of ghetto children. Bereiter concludes:

> By the time they are five years old, disadvantaged children of almost every kind are typically one of two years retarded in language development. This is supported by virtually any index of language one cares to look at (1965: 196)

Any linguist will look at such a conclusion with immediate suspicion. Closer investigation of this claim reveals that the fact that these children do not speak standard English is taken to mean that they are linguistically retarded, and, in many cases, that they cognitively deficient. Thus, if a black lower class child says <u>He nice</u>, a correspondence of the present tense standard English <u>He's nice</u>, it is considered to be an underdeveloped standard English approximation and equivalent to the absence of copula at a particular stage of standard English development (See, for example, Bereiter and Engelmann 1966: 139-140). The fact that this form is used by adult speakers is irrelvant, only meaning that adults may have some stabalized form of language retardation. The linguist, however, suggests that Black English is simply one of many languages and dialects, including Russian, which have a zero copula realization in the present tense. No meaning is lost; an "identity statement" is just as permissible in this dialect as any other language or dialect. This form has no relation

to the ability or inability to conceptualize. Similarly, auditory discrimination tests (such as Wepman's 1958) which are designed on a standard English norm are de-facto dismissed by the linguist as biased against the nonstandard system. The learning of standard English must be clearly differentiated from language development of an indigeneous dialect. Careful attention should be made, from the viewpoint of linguistic relativism, in order not to erroneously transfer legitimate dialect differences into matters of language acquisition.

The linguist, in support of the linguistic equality of nonstandard dialects, considers evidence on relative language proficiency as that recently provided by Baratz (1969) to be an empirical justification for his claims. Baratz conducted a bidialectal test in which she has compared the proficiency of a group of black ghetto children in repeating standard English and Black English sentences. As might be expected, the black children were considerably more proficient in repeating the Black English sentences. When they repeated the standard English sentences, however, there were predictable differences in their repetitions based on interference from Black English. The same test was then administered to a group of white middle class suburban children, who repeated the standard English sentences quite adequately, but had predictable differences in their repetition of the Black English sentences based on interference from standard English. Which of these groups, then, was linguistically retarded? We must be careful not to confuse social acceptability, and no one would deny the social stigmatization of nonstandard dialects, with language acquisition.

In sum, the relativistic viewpoint of the linguist emphasizes the fully systematic, but different nature of nonstandard dialects. This

committment, however, should not be taken to mean that linguists are necessarily for the perpetuation of nonstandard dialects in the face of middle class intolerance. We are certainly not so naive as to suggest that standard English is not a prerequisite for making it in middle class society, and the person who desires to do so must be given that option. The stigmatization of nonstandard dialects, even by those who regularly use them as their only means of communication, is such that learning standard English may be a socially expedient correlate of upward mobility. But these social issues, the linguist argues, have nothing to do with the inherent capacity of nonstandard dialects for effective communication within their prescribed social group.

## II

## Current Research

Within the discipline of linguistics, it is the field of dialectology which was responsible for the earliest attempts to account for social variation in speech. American dialectologists recognized that social differences had to be considered, even though the primary goal of dialect geography was the correlation of settlement history with regional varieties of English. Kurath, for example, in directing the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada was aware that social differences intersected with settlement history and geographical differences to account for linguistic variation. As reported in the Handbook of the Linguistic Geography of New England, Linguistic Atlas fieldworkers divided informants into three main types, as follows:

> Type I: Little formal education, little reading and restricted social contacts.
>
> Type II: Better formal education (usually high school) and/or wider reading and social contacts.
>
> Type III: Superior education (usually college), cultured background, wide reading and/or extensive social contacts (Kurath 1939: 44).

In addition, each of the above types was subdivided as:

> Type A Aged, and/or regarded by the fieldworker as old fashioned.
>
> Type B Middle-aged or younger, and/or regarded by the fieldworker as more modern (Kurath 1939: 44).

Although different social types were recognized in the work of the Linguistic Atlas, several difficulties were apparent because the social parameter was not adequately considered. The social classification of informants was dependent on the fieldworkers' subjective impressions. The vagueness with which the social types were profiled (e.g. "little

reading and restricted social contacts") caused the social classification of informants to be unreliable. Furthermore, no verifiable sociological model for rating the social status of informants was utilized. Education, which seemed to be primary in the evaluation of informants, is only one of the various factors which is used by social scientists in rating social status.

Whereas the correlation of social with linguistic differences was of secondary concern in the work of the Linguistic Atlas (Kurath 1941, 1949), later interpretation of the Linguistic Atlas data gave more direct attention to the importance of social factors in accounting for linguistic diversity. Dialectologists, however, still seemed to appeal to the social parameter only when "data proved too complicated to be explained by merely a geographical statement or a statement of settlement history" (McDavid 1948: 194). Thus, McDavid's "Postvocalic -r in South Carolina: A social analysis" (1948) amends a geographical explanation of postvocalic -r in the Piedmont area of South Carolina by analyzing the intersection of social class with geographical differences.

As will be seen later, dialectologists continue to work with the social consequences of speech variation, but the methods of "mainstream dialectologists" such as Kurath, McDavid, and Pederson have actually changed very little.

From another perspective, anthropological linguists have made significant contributions to the study of linguistic correlates of social stratification in the last decade. Whereas dialectologists have been satisfied with rough approximations of social divisions to which linguistic phenomena may be related, anthropologists have characteristically been rigorous in their differentiation of social groups to which

linguistic variables may be related. Independent ethnographical description of behavioral patterns characterizing different social strata is required before any correlation of linguistic variables with these strata can be made. Research on the social stratification of linguistic features has been pioneered by Gumperz (1958a, 1958b, 1961, 1964), Hymes (1961, 1964), and Bright (1960, 1964, 1966). For example, Gumperz, in several articles (1958a, 1958b), has shown how linguistic variables, particularly phonological variables, relate to the caste systems of India. Southeastern Asia, perhaps because of its rigid stratification between castes, has received the most extensive consideration by anthropological linguists. Anthropological linguists such as Hymes and Gumperz have concerned themselves with developing a structural taxonomy of the factors which must be dealt with from a sociolinguistic perspective of verbal behavior, such as settings, participants, topics, and functions of interaction. Little consideration has been given to American English by anthropological linguists, although Fisher (1958) provided an analysis of the morphemic variation between the suffixal participle /-ɪŋ/ and /-ɪn/ in English by considering the social background of 24 children in a New England town.

It was Labov's work on the social stratification of English in New York city (1963a, 1963b, 1965a, 1966b, 1966c), more than any other research, that has sharpened the theoretical and methodological bases for sociolinguistic research. Using a survey by the Mobilization for Youth as his sociological model, he analyzed the speech of over a hundred, randomly selected informants. Five different phonological variables (oh, eh, r, th, dh), isolated in four contextual styles (careful speech, casual speech, reading, word lists) were correlated with the social

stratification of the informants. Labov made several major contributions to the study of linguistic correlates of social stratification. In the first place, he used sociologically valid procedures in selecting the informants for his sample. Many linguists prior to Labov were largely satisfied with biased, non-random informant selection. Also, Labov's quantitative measurement of linguistic variables, although not the first, was considerably more extensive than any previous sociolinguistic research. Further, his effort to isolate contextual styles on the basis of extra-linguistic "channel cues" was a careful attempt to define interview styles in linguistics. The major contribution of Labov was his demonstration that speech differences within a community, often dismissed by linguists as "free variation", systematically correlated with social differences.

The Detroit Dialect Study (Shuy, Wolfram and Riley 1967), experimented with several different methods of analyzing speech differences. It extended the insights of Labov on the linguistic variable to grammatical as well as phonological variables. An attempt to measure differences by the quantitative measurement of structural types (e.g. clause and phrase types) was also investigated.

Despite a developing sociolinguistic tradition within linguistics over the past several decades, the actual structural description of nonstandard dialects has received little attention.[9]

---

9. Nonstandard dialects have, of course, always received incidental attention in prescriptive English textbooks which point out "incorrect" speech patterns to be avoided.

To a certain degree, this lack of attention can be attributed to the attitude that nonstandard speech is less worthy of interest than the study of socially acceptable varieties of English. Another contributing factor for this neglect may have been the assumption that the nonstandard dialects were minimally different in their structure and that when comprehensive studies of standard English were completed, it would be a relatively simple matter to adjust grammatical descriptions to include nonstandard varieties. With respect to Black English, descriptive attention was no doubt delayed by dialectologists who maintained that it was not essentially different from the speech of Southern whites of comparable socio-economic levels. As an example of such a view, note Kurath's conclusions from his work on the Linguistic Atlas:

> By and large the Southern Negro speaks the language of the white man of his locality or area and of his education.... As far as the speech of the uneducated Negroes is concerned, it differs little from that of the illiterate white; that is, it exhibits the same regional and local variations as that of the simple white folk. (1949:6)

Stewart (1965:13) also observes that the structural neglect of Black English may also have been related to concern for the feelings of Negroes:

> As this [the study of Black English] relates to the speech of Negroes, it has been reinforced by a commendable desire to emphasize the potential of the Negro to be identical with white Americans and ac-

> cordingly to deemphasize any current behavioral patterns which might not seem to contribute directly to that goal... respect for the feeling of Negroes themselves has probably played a part in discouraging the study of Negro speech. For, as is quite understandable, many Negroes (particularly educated ones) are somewhat sensitive about any public focus on distinctively Negro behavior, particularly if it happens to be that of lower class Negroes.

Whatever the reasons may have been, it was not until the last few years that the study of Black English was seriously undertaken. Although there are several current research projects on the linguistic structure of Black English, by comparison, there are still only limited number of linguists who have taken a serious interest in this area.

Stewart (1964, 1967, 1968) and Bailey (1965) probably did more to turn the attention of linguists to the study of Black English than any one else, partly because their work chronologically preceded other linguists and partly because of their dogmatic rejection of the dialectological treatment of ethnic differences in speech. Coming from creolist backgrounds, both Bailey and Stewart maintained that Black English was <u>not</u> identical to the speech of Southern whites of a comparable socio-economic class, but significantly different. Bailey, for example, noted:

> I would like to suggest that the Southern Negro "dialect" differs from other Southern speech because its deep structure is different, having

> its origins as it undoubtedly does in some Proto-Creole grammatical structure. (1965:172)

Obviously, such a position comes into sharp conflict with the traditional position suggested by a number of American dialectologists. What then, can account for this sharp difference of opinion? One explanation is that dialectologists have focused their attention on the similarities between nonstandard Negro dialects and white dialects, whereas creolists have focused on the differences between these two varieties of English. Dialectologists have been largely occupied with phonological and lexical differences, the levels on which the dialects are nearly (but not completely) alike. Creolists, on the other hand, have concerned themselves with subtle differences between grammatical categories. Stewart has mainly concentrated on the historical relations of Black English to what he considers a creole origin. He notes:

> Of those Africans who fell victim to the Atlantic slave trade and were brought to the New World, many found it necessary to learn some kind of English. With very few exceptions, the form of English which they acquired was a pidginized one, and this kind of English became so well-established as the principal medium of communication between Negro slaves in the British colonies that it was passed on as a creole language to succeeding generations of the New World Negroes, from whom it was their native tongue (1967: 22).

Present-day Negro dialect, according to Stewart, has resulted from a process which labels "decreolization" (i.e. the loss of creole

features). Through contact with the British-derived dialects the creole variety of English spoken by Negroes merged with other dialects on English. The merging process, however, was neither instantaneous nor complete. Stewart asserts:

> Indeed, the non-standard speech of present-day American Negroes still seems to exhibit structural traces of a creole predecessor, and this is probably a reason why it is in some ways more deviant from standard English than is the non-standard speech of even the most uneducated American whites (1968: 3).

Stewart substantiates his claim that Negro dialects are derived from a widespread slave creole by examining the close relationship which is found between 18th and 19th century Negro dialect and other New World creoles (Stewart 1967). His source for the study of 18th and 19th century Negro dialect is the representations of Negro dialect used in the literary works of this period. Although this may seem like an unreliable source, Stewart's exhaustive knowledge of the literary records of Negro dialect during this period and his apparent ability to evaluate the reliability of the various authors makes his historical documentation quite plausible.[10] Furthermore, Stewart's familiarity with a number of different creoles, including Gullah and the Caribbean creoles, causes one to consider seriously any statement he makes concerning the relations of various Black English structures

---

10. It would, of course, be nice if Stewart would put his actual method for determining the reliability of the various literary records in print, so that this type of information would be available to the general public.

to a creole predecessor. Although Stewart's thorough knowledge of Black English certainly can not be disputed, several points he makes do not appear to be as clear-cut as he asserts. For one, his approach to analysis concentrates on particular items rather than a wholistic approach to the structure of Black English. An attempt to assemble a comprehensive inventory of differences between Southern white and Negro of comparable socio-economic classes may lead one to a considerable smaller list than anticipated.

Furthermore, the origins of some of the items would certainly be disputed by dialectologists. Others might be disputed on empirical grounds. For example, Stewart observes that implosive stops, which he claims are quite easy for the trained phonetician to perceive are unique to the Black English speaker. But there are some linguists who would claim that the American English stop can sometimes be implosive. Furthermore, I know of three reasonably competent phoneticians who agree that both Black and white speakers use implosives. At any rate, the issue is not nearly as clear-cut as Stewart makes it out to be.

Finally, Stewart emphasizes differences between Black English and standard English as opposed to similarities. This in itself may be justified since it is the differences which cause interference problems between dialects. It must be pointed out however, that the inventory of differences is much smaller than the inventory of similarities. In addition, the clear majority of differences seem to be on a surface rather than an underlying level (See, e.g. Labov, et al 1968). In most inventories of differences between Black English and other English varieties, the lists are quite restricted. An expansive list is lacking, either because the list is simply not as exhaustive as

suggested or because descriptive data are still lacking.

From a purely descriptive viewpoint there are several current projects which merit attention. Probably the most radical of these is offered by Loflin (1967b, 1968) formerly of the Center for Applied Linguistics and presently of the Center for Research in Social Behavior at the University of Missouri. Loflin considers the differences between standard English and Black English to be of such significance that Black English be treated as a foreign language. He observes:

> Efforts to construct a grammar for Nonstandard Negro English suggest that the similarities between it and Standard English are superficial. There is every reason, at this stage of research to believe that a fuller description of Nonstandard Negro English will show a grammatical system which must be treated as a foreign language (1967a: 1312).

In justification of his treatment of Black English as a significantly different system (i.e. different in its underlying structure) from standard English, he has described the verb system.[11] He concludes that aspect dominates over tense in Black English, whereas the opposite is true for standard English. A careful look at his description reveals that it must be challenged both on empirical and theoretical grounds. For example, one of the basic justifications for his description of the verb system of Black English is the absence of the auxiliary <u>have</u> in the running test of his <u>single</u> informant;

---

11. This choice is by no means accidental since most linguists agree that if there are any significant differences between Black English and Standard English, they will be found in the verb system.

empirical investigation of the staff at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, Labov in New York, and Wolfram in Detroit clearly reveal the underlying presence of _have_ (although it may be deleted by a low level phonological rule). In fact, one of the striking things about Black English seems to be the extraordinary use of the past form of this construction in narrative discourse (e.g. _He had came to the store_).

Other parts of Loflin's analysis of the verbal system reveal a neglect of the overall pattering of Black English. Thus, for example, the clear evidence that a phonological pattern is responsible for the absence of most past tense _-ed_ suffixes is overlooked (see e.g. Wolfram 1969:71-74). Aside from these types of important oversights , Loflin shows some inadequacies in the use of the model in which he describes the structure of Black English—transformational-generative grammar. Even if one assumes that Loflin's analysis of the passive is correct (Loflin 1968), Loflin's passive rule is entirely unworkable in any current theory of generative grammar. (i.e. it does not generate what Loflin says it generates). Although Loflin's work certainly shows a high degree of creativity, his general approach and specific description of the Black English verb system can hardly be considered valid.

A somewhat different attempt to describe the linguistic structure of Child Black English in Florida is offered by Houston (1969). A number of phonological "rules" are given, but no grammatical rules since, according to Houston, "only four major syntactic differences between Child Black and standard White English have appeared" (1969: 606). To those linguists seriously attempting to describe the structure

of Black English, Houston's description shows significant theoretical and empirical flaws. From a theoretical standpoint, her approach to the description of Black English cannot be considered acceptable ro from any current taxonomic or generative standpoint. Her rules are, by her own admission, nothing more than a set of correspondences which relate Child Black English to White Standard English, yet she sets up her correspondences in the form of processes so that they have the form of pseudo rewrite rules. Her justification for this curious device is "convenience", hardly a sufficient reason for the theoretical or descriptive linguist. In essence, what she does is derive surface forms in Black English from surface forms in standard White English. The rules are even given as ordered, yet any descriptive linguist can see that they are not ordered in the sense that this concept is used from any standpoint in linguistics.

Some of the rules she gives also lack formal motivation. Although she mentions general postulates which govern the treatment of phenomena as phonological instead of grammatical ("their relative generality in the language as a whole, and the importance of the grammatical claims" (1969:603), some of the rules she treats as phonological can be seriously disputed. Why, for example, is the third person singular -Z a phonological rule rather than a grammatical rule? Third person singular -Z affects all verbs, not only those involving consonant clusters (e.g. it affects boos as well as dreams). Yet, lack of formal motivation for the correspondence is lacking so that the rules appear to simply be ad hoc. Some of the rules which are given, furthermore, do not describe the data which they presumably are supposed to account for. Thus, as the rule for consonant cluster reduction is

formally stated, it can account only for bimorphemic clusters (e.g. it can account for guessed being realized as /gɛs/, but not a monomorphemic cluster like guest , which is realized as /gɛs/. Such apparent oversights are, unfortunately, characteristic of the rules.

And finally, some of the empirical data she displays are suspect. Stewart, Labov, and the staff at the Center for Applied Linguistics working with Black English would all have critical disputes about some of her observed data. Even if she treats a number of apparently grammatical phenomena as phonological, she does not mention differences in verbal paradigms, modals, person agreement, existential it, pleonastic forms other than pronominal apposition, etc. In the light of these theoretical and empirical inadequacies, Houston's study cannot be considered as a serious attempt to describe the structure of Black English from a linguistic perspective.

The research of Labov and associates (1965, 1968) on the structure of the nonstandard speech of Negroes and Puerto Ricans in New York is the single most exhaustive study of a nonstandard speech community available.[12] Having already cited contributions that Labov made to sociolinguistics in his study of the overall population of New York City, we must again cite a number of significant sociolinguistic innovations in his Harlem research. In the first place, his study of language in the setting of an adolescent peer group broke with the more traditional individual interview method of sociolinguistics. Furthermore, he has described both the functional and structural aspects of the nonstandard vernacular. The structural description of Black English included more features of the phonology and grammar of Black English in detail than any other single description. In addition to

12. Although Labov includes Puerto Rican speech in his title, his actual description is limited to the Negro population.

have on variability. This is not to say that a statement of the relevant environments in which so-called "free variation" took place was not a requisite for adequate linguistic description. But the recognition that certain environments may affect the occurrence of a given variant much more than others was characteristically absent. Yet, the variables described by Labov and others (See, e.g. Wolfram 1969) show that certain types of linguistic environments intersect with extra-linguistic factors to account for variation between forms. Labov, therefore, has suggested that the notion of linguistic and non-linguistic constraints be incorporated into the formal representation of a linguistic rule. He has thus proposed what he calls the variable rule (1968:24). By introducing the variable rule, Labov attempts to formally incorporate the constraints (linguistic and non-linguistic) which directly affect the variability of items. To achieve this end, Labov suggests that "we associate with each variable rule a specific quantity which denotes the proportion of cases in which the rule applies as part of the rule structure itself" (Labov 1968:25). The value of a variable rule is defined as a function of the constraints which limit the categorical operation of the rule. This may be represented as:

$$f = 1 - (a + b + c + \ldots n)$$

where f = the frequency of application, 1 the categorical operation of a rule, and a, b, c, ...n the various constraints limiting categorical rule application (i.e. the variable input). The constraints are "ranked" — ranked in sense that certain linguistic environments clearly outweigh others in their effect on variability (e.g. a > b > c > ...n).

Labov's creative innovations in field methods and his comprehensive sociolinguistic description of Black English, he has carefully examined the implications that his research has for theoretical linguistics. Based on his elicitation of peer group speech in a relatively spontaneous setting, he has observed that many of the variants associated with Black English must be considered "inherently variable" with more standard-like variants. That is, fluctuation between many variants seem to be inherent to the vernacular structure and not simply an "importation" from a superimposed variety.[13] Evidence for this is found in the systematic ways in which certain types of fluctuation seem to operate within the most indigenous speech situation.[14] Labov points out that independent linguistic as well as social variables must be considered in describing the systematic variation of forms. The correlation of sociological with linguistic variables to account for fluctuation between forms has become well-established within the last decade of sociolinguistic research. But the notion of systematic variation as a function of independent linguistic cariables has not been considered seriously. The fact that linguistic environment can greatly affect the variability of items has some important implications on the concept of "optionality" in linguistics. The limitation of linguistics to qualitative, discrete units has somehow precluded any affect that linguistic environment may

---

13. This position does not preclude the possibility that historically, alternations may have been importations. It simply means that from a synchronic standpoint, fluctuation is an inherent part of the Black English system.

14. For a more detailed discussion of the differentiation of "dialect mixture" from inherent variability, see Wolfram (1968:43-47).

Labov's careful examination of the Black English system and field techniques leave little room for criticism. The description of certain features will certainly not find unanimous agreement (See, e.g. Wolfram 196: 192-194), but Labov's overall study is a most important sociolinguistic description. His incorporation of the variable rule into a formal grammar will, however, stir considerable disagreement among linguists. The controversy over the rule does not conern its observational adequacy, but whether this can and should be included in the formal description of a grammar. Is this rule simply part of a "performance" model, and, as such, irrelevant to the descriptive adequacy of a grammar, or is this an integral part of language "competence"? The quantitative figures which can be assigned to various constraints would seem to be part of performance model, but the regular and hierarchical effect of various linguistic constraints on variability cannot be dismissed quite as readily. This is, no doubt, an issue that is destined to be of considerable importance for theoretical linguistics.

The research undertaken by the Sociolinguistics Program at the Center for Applied Linguistics deals both with the linguistic correlates of stratification in the Negro community and the structural description of Black English. Data from several different locations is being analyzed, including Washington, D.C., Detroit, Michigan (a continuation of the Detroit Dialect Study under the direction of Roger Shuy), and more recently, Lexington, Mississippi. Wolfram's study of the Detroit Negro population demonstrates how several classes of Negroes are differential on the basis of grammatical and phonological variables. The role of social status, sex, age, and racial isolation are all shown

to correlate with linguistic differences. In addition, the extent to which the social differentiation between linguistic variables is quantitative or qualitative, the relation between social diagnostic phonological and grammatical variables and the effect of independent linguistic constrants in variability are examined.

The investigation of phonological and grammatical variables reveals that the phonological differences between social groups tend to be quantitative whereas the grammatical differences are often qualitative. Three of the four phonological variables (word-final consonant clusters, syllable-final _d_, and postvocalic _r_) indicate that the social groups are differentiated primarily on the basis of the relative frequency of variants. Only the _θ_ variable, which shows the categorical absence of the _f_ variant in middle-class speech, indicates a qualitative difference between social groups. On the other hand, all four grammatical variables (multiple negation, suffixal -_Z_, copula absence, and invariant _be_) reveal the categorical absence of certain variants among middle-class informants.

By introducing the concepts of "sharp" (i.e. a significant difference in the frequency of particular variants between contiguous social groups) and "gradient" (i.e. a progressive difference in the frequency of particular variants between social groups) an important difference in the way phonological and grammatical variables stratify the population can be observed. Grammatical variables usually show sharp stratification, whereas phonological variables show gradient stratification. All the grammatical variables investigated in the study reveal sharp stratification, whereas three of the four phonological variables indicate gradient stratification.

Finally, Wolfram's research demonstrates that it is impossible to arrive at an adequate understanding of the nature of sociolinguistic variation without considering the effects of independent linguistic constrants. In accounting for frequency differences among variants it is essential to consider the effect of linguistic environment.

Wolfram's work reinforces many of the conclusions that Labov has independently come to in his research in New York, suggesting that there is considerable uniformity in the sociolinguistic patterning of Black English in large, Northern metropolitan areas. Wolfram's limited sample (48 informants), however, needs further extention, particularly with reference to his conclusions about age, sex, and racial isolation. Statistical sophistication is also lacking in some of his conclusions based on quantitative differences. Finally, the functional reasons for certain types of differences, although important, are not examined. For example, is the pattern of sex differentiation due to different types of contact situations that males and females have with the socially superordinate white community (e.g. female domestics working in close contact with middle-class white females) or is this an indigenous behavioral characteristic of the Negro community (e.g. the use of socially stigmatized forms is a symbol of masculinity)?

Fasold's research in Washington, D.C. currently includes a study of the social stratification of speech in the Negro community and the structural description of various features of Black English. Recently Fasold (1969) has explicated one of the crucial issues for sociolinguistic analysis and the representation of sociolinguistic information from a linguistic perspective, namely, "implicational analysis",

"frequency analysis", or a combination of the two. The former approach deals with the implication of the presence of certain socially diagnostic linguistic features for the presence/absence of others; frequency analysis involves the variability of linguistic features as they relate to social class, and the combination of the two approaches used the statistical method of "factor analysis" to deal both with the frequency of occurrence and the co-occurrence restrictions of variants. In investigating these various approaches, Fasold suggests that the more adequate approach is probably the one that can most readily incorporate the insights of the other. He concludes that frequency analysis can incorporate the insights of continuum analysis by simply including an "invariance category," whereas continuum analysis must arbitrary assign any observed variability between features into a binary categories. He submits that the third approach, that of combining continuum and frequency approaches via factor analysis is the least revealing because it only leads to groupings already obvious. Also, there is no apparent way to incorporate factor analysis into linguistic theory. It appears, however, that Fasold has dismissed the third alternative too lightly. Theoretically, it holds the potential to reveal less than obvious continuum sets, and to validate apparent groupings. If it then proves to be valid, it is the task of linguistic theory to incorporate this concept.

Another important area currently being investigated by Roger Shuy and colleagues is that of relation between white southern and Negro speech of comparable socio-economic classes, based on data from Lexington, Mississippi. Although still at a preliminary stage

of analysis, it is hoped that these data will reveal concrete answers to the controversy of Negro/White speech differences in the deep South.

Although the above mentioned projects describe current major research dealing with the study of nonstandard dialects in the United States, there are several other studies that can be mentioned briefly. We have already seen how the work of American dialectologists was one of the earliest attempts to deal with social factors in linguistic diversity within linguistics. The more recent work of McDavid and Austin (1967), Pederson (1965) and Williamson (1961) indicates a continued interest in this area. However, retention of Linguistic Atlas techniques, now superceded by more sophisticated sociological and anthropological techniques, places such research at a serious disadvantage. The continued emphasis on lexical items and phonology preclude a comprehensive structural description of a nonstandard grammar. Current studies of social dialects by dialectologists have also neglected the systematic nature of variation that quantitative studies of variability reveal. Furthermore, the apparent disinterest in the implications of such research for linguistic theory does not coincide with the direction of current sociolinguistic studies.

There are also several projects which can only be mentioned briefly because of their incipient nature. Fraser and colleagues at the Language Research Foundation are presently beginning the description of Child Black English in New York City, employing the most up-to-date insights of theoretical linguistic. Fieldwork in this project however, has not yet begun.

The sociolinguistics aspect (there is also a pedogogical aspect) of the study by Legum, Williams and associates (1968), under the auspicies of the Southwest Regional Laboratory at Inglewood is presently conducting interviews with child peer groups in Watts. At this stage, only the statement of the theoretical linguistic and sociolinguistic foundations of their research is available and these are derived mainly from Labov's research.

The East Texas Dialect Project, directed by Troike and Galvan at the University of Texas (1968), has conducted interviews with over 200 informants in five communities in East Texas, representing different races, several socio-economic levels, and various age groups. The interview involved the elicitation of free conversation between a fieldworker and two informants. Preliminary exploration has resulted in the isolation of a number of different phonological and grammatical variables for analysis, and the frequency of socially significant variants is now being analyzed.

The Pittsburgh Dialect Project, by Parslow and colleagues (1968) is an attempt to identify regional and social parameters of different social and ethnic groups, following the model that Shuy used in the Detroit Dialect Study. This project, however, is still involved in data collection so that no description of the analysis is yet available.

Finally, a project being carried out by Billiard, Lazarus, and McDavid in Fort Wayne (1969) focuses on the identification of socially diagnostic linguistic features. The prospectus of this project does not include detailed linguistic analysis, however, and the field procedures are apparently not taking advantage of the most recent developments in field techniques.

# III
# DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

On the basis of our previous discussion of research projects, it should be apparent that some aspects of social dialects are being studied thoroughly while others are neglected. It is therefore the purpose of this section to summarize areas which have been investigated adequately and to suggest the direction that future research might take.[15] These can conveniently be discussed in terms of three main areas: (1) field techniques, (2) descriptive studies, and (3) theoretical issues.

## 1. Field Techniques

As was seen in the preceding section, sociolinguistic field procedures by linguists have made rapid progress within the last several years. We now see that the design of fieldwork and sampling procedures can give a reliable representation of the sociolinguistic parameters of a community (See, for example, Labov 1966a, Chapter 6 or Shuy, Wolfram and Riley 1968, Chapter 2). Current interview procedures have also developed according to social science standards of interviewing (See Labov 1966, Chapter 5 or Shuy, Wolfram and Riley 1968, Chapter 5-7, and Slobin 1967) so that many of the criticisms of Pickford (1956) concerning the inadequacy of the Linguistic Atlas fieldwork design are no longer applicable to current sociolinguistic research. Furthermore, elicitation procedures, particulary as related to stylistic variation, have made significant advances following the insights of Labov (1966a, 1968).

---

15. These directions, no doubt, reflect the biases of the author. However, many of these directions have been discussed with my colleagues at one time or another, so that they represent more than personal preferences.

There are, however, several areas in which further refinement of research design can add to the validity and reliability of sociolinguistic studies. With respect to sampling, we are still not certain of the most efficient size for a reliable study of social dialects. What, for example, is the minimal number of informants in each social "cell" for the linguist to adequately characterize the linguistic behavior of that cell. It appears that linguistic behavior is more homogeneous than some other types of behavior investigated by sociologists so that we can conceivably achieve reliability using a smaller sample than other types of sociological surveys. Also, because of the detailed nature of certain types of linguistic analysis, it is impractical to work with samples the size of some sociological surveys. But we still do not know what constitutes a minimally adequate representation for the study of social dialects. One way of getting at such information would be to take a reasonably large sample such as the Detroit Dialect Study (which included over 700 interviews) and compare several linguistic features using different sizes of subsamples within the large study to establish a minimal standard for a reliable sample. Information of this type could determine the most efficient size of future social dialect surveys.

Another area where we lack concrete information concerns the role of the fieldworker in affecting the speech of informants. We suspect that the race, sex, or social class of the interviewer might be important conditioning factors with respect to speech, and there are several studies which show such factors to correlate with speech variation (e.g. Anshen 1969). But we still need an exhaustive study

of the relative importance of the social characteristics of the interviewer. For example, is the correlation between the race of the interviewer and the informant's speech variation simply a function of race, or is it actually more related to a person's ability to identify with the social class of the informant, or, is it a combination of these? And, if such correlations exist, do they affect all socially diagnostic linguistics variables or only those on a more conscious level? These are questions about the interview which will suggest the relative importance of controlling interviewer variables.

One area of top priority for field techniques is the establishment of elicitation procedures which can get at judgements of the grammaticality of nonstandard structures apart from judgements about social acceptability. The linguist's usual procedure is to obtain a language sample in order to determine the rules of the grammar and then directly ask the native informant whether or not certain grammatical contrasts that he reconstructs from his rules are indeed significant in his language (i.e. can they be generated by the rules of his grammar?). This same procedure, however, cannot be used in dealing with the grammaticality of nonstandard sentences, since it is virtually impossible to get such judgements isolated from social notions of acceptability (i.e. the Miss Fiditch notion of "correctness"). Thus, for example, if a linguist were to ask a Black English informant if a sentence such as <u>Didn't nobody do nothing</u> were acceptable, he is liable to have the informant reject the sentence. But we cannot be sure if the informant rejected the sentence because it is not part of his competence or because of the social stigmatization of the sentence. Ideally, this might be overcome by a linguistically sophisticated

native speaker of Black English. However, in my experience, most linguistically sophisticated speakers of Black English have also acquired standard English, and, in doing so, invariably have lost sensitivity to the grammatical boundaries of the Black English vernacular, which are so important in establishing underlying competence. It is therefore imperative that we develop methods by which we can get at the generative capacity of the Black English grammar rules. In order to do so, we must take advantage of more indirect ways of getting at competence. One important way may be through the development of different types of "word games". For example, Fasold (personal communication) has been experimenting with a sentence completion technique in which the informant is given a stimulus sentence and asked to respond to the sentence on the basis of a pattern which will determine whether or not the given feature is present in the underlying structure. To illustrate, consider whether or not the underlying auxiliary have is an integral part of the Black English grammatical system. The informant is given a sentence such as <u>They been there a long time</u>, and asked to respond to this sentence by completing the response <u>I know they</u> _____. If the informant responds by completing the sentence with <u>have</u>, we may be assured that there is an underlying <u>have</u>; however, if he responds by using another auxiliary such as <u>did</u>, then he probably does not have the underlying auxiliary <u>have</u>. The establishment of such indirect techniques to get at competence is important for future structural descriptions of the nonstandard grammatical systems. Of course, one must be careful to use stimuli sentences and patterns which are indigenous to the dialect, which makes familiarity with the dialect

a prerequisite. In developing procedures of this type, linguistic fieldwork can probably profit mostly from elicitation techniques for children (See Slobin, 1967; Menyuk 1969, Chapter 4) at various acquisitional levels, but other new techniques will also have to be established.

Finally, the linguist interested in the social parameters of language is still uncertain about the importance of statistical calculations in comparing the various quantitative measurements that are made. Both Labov (1968) and Wolfram (1969) rely heavily on quantitative evidence, but neither uses tests to determine the statistical significance of their quantitative differences. Linguists, because of a tradition of qualitative analysis, tend to ignore statistical calculations. In justification we may say that some of the quantitative differences are so prominent that statistical calculations are hardly needed. In other cases, it is the establishment of the general direction of different frequency scores that is more important than the significance between specific figures. Furthermore, the linguist might claim that his data are far more regular and reproducable than the type of data sociologists are used to analyzing via statistics. But we may be arguing from naivetè. At any rate, the relative importance of statistics for sociolinguistic study is an area which needs careful research and explication. We must know in what areas statistical calculations are expedient, what areas they are questionable and what areas they are inapplicable for the linguist doing research in social dialects.

2. Descriptive Studies

As we noted in our description of current research projects, there are several aspects of social dialects in the United States which have occupied the attention of linguists. Corresponding to the popular focus on Negroes in the inner city, we have witnessed a number of attempts to describe the grammatical and phonological structure of Black English, varying greatly in quality. Research in New York, Detroit, Washington, D.C., and Watts on the structure of Black English seems to give adequate representation of this dialect in the large urban area, especially because of the apparent similarity in the structure of Black English in these areas. This is not to say that there are no regional differences, but the overall structure of the dialect shows striking similarities in these different locations. There are, of course, aspects of the dialect which have not been covered in detail, but the major features of the dialect can be derived by looking at the various studies. One descriptive aspect which has not been covered in any of these studies is intonation, yet most linguists agree that there are substantial differences between Black English and other varieties of English in this area.

The correlation of social class with linguistic variables in large urban areas is also receiving an increasing amount of attention. The relationship of various parameters of social class have or are currently being described for New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Fort Wayne, so that we are obtaining a representative number of studies on language and social class.

There are, however, still a number of areas which have received little or no descriptive attention. In the preceding paragraph one

can note that the majority of studies of Black English focus on large Northern areas. We still need adequate descriptive studies of Black English in both the rural and urban South. Such studies must be the first step in comparing the linguistic assimilation that takes place when mass migration takes place, as it did during the last fifty years among the Negro population. Are Southern and Northern varieties of Black English essentially alike, and, if not, in what ways do they differ? Only comprehensive studies of the structure of Black English in selected areas of the South can answer this question. Such studies should preferably be selected to represent different areas of the South, including the coastal central inland, and deep South.

In addition to the description of Black English in the South, we also need comprehensive descriptive studies of nonstandard Southern white dialects. Although dialectologists have given us some indication of the phonology and lexicon of Southern white speech, the grammatical structure of Southern white nonstandard speech is lacking. As was suggested for the study of Black English in the South, several areas should be included, representing Appalachia, the deep South, and Atlantic coast regions. Descriptive studies of this type can help us resolve the controversy over the exact relationship between the speech of Southern whites and Negroes of comparable socio-economic classes.

Descriptions of the correlation of social and linguistic variables have also focused on Northern metropolitan areas. But there are important reasons why these should be extended to cover several areas of the South. Some Southern regional features have apparently only taken

on social significance in the North because of their association with ethnicity and social class in the North. By contrast, there are other features which have social significance regardless of the geographical region (a distinction between what I have called "general" and "particular" social significance). Careful studies of the social significance of linguistic variables in the South can help us sharpen our understanding of the interaction of geographical and social factors in speech. Furthermore, such studies can lead us to general conclusions about the nature of sociolinguistic variation in the United States.

Another area of great importance for descriptive studies is that of age-grading. The importance of observing age levels in speech variation was ... brought out by Hockett (1950) some time ago but the actual amount of descriptive study has been sparse. Recently Stewart (1968) and Dillard (1967) have suggested that an accurate picture of the nature of Black English cannot be studied apart from a description of age-grading within the Black community. Loban's (1966) longitudinal study of children in California hints at crucial age differences, but his taxonomy and linguistic orientation would be unacceptable from the viewpoint of the linguist.

Studies of age-grading should not be confused with the description of language acquistion, which is an area for descriptive studies in its own right, as we shall shortly see. Age-grade studies should start with the earliest post-acquisitional period (6-8). The age level when sensitivity to the social consequences of speech behavior starts to approximate adult norms (according to Labov (1965b:91), this is about age 14 or 15) is of extreme importance for the linguist.

The speech of teen-agers is, of course, simply one aspect of their behavioral response to the adult world which can give us invaluable sociolinguistic information. Such studies, though, cannot be separated from peer group norms, so that such studies must concentrate on peer groups.

Acquisitional studies of nonstandard dialects are also needed for cross-cultural investigation. But such studies must be related to nonstandard norms, a condition which some acquisitional studies have not observed.[16] For example, the acquisition of f and θ by speakers of Black English must be related to the function of these units within the vernacular (e.g. /f/ in final position being the Black English adult norm). To do otherwise can only lead to some of the fallacious conclusions that we have already discussed in Part I of this report. This is not to say that a comparative study of nonstandard speech patterns and certain stages of acquisition for Standard English speakers should not be undertaken. In fact, we need such studies to show us of the ways in which nonstandard dialects are similar and different from certain stages in language acquisition. For example, we observe that copula absence occurs in Black English and also at a certain stage of language acquisition for all children, or we observe that the f/θ contrast, one of the last phonological contrast to be acquired by standard English speakers, is characteristic of Black English in certain positions. We need to know in precisely what ways these features function similarly and in what ways differently.

16. Only by relating it to nonstandard norms can we have some indication of actual language retardation by a small minority of lower socio-economic class children. Current studies which utilize standard English norms of acquisition erroneously categorize a majority of these children as being linguistically retarded (a case of misconceived retardation).

Such studies must serve as the basis for disputing claims that Black English indicates a relation to retarded Standard English language acquisition.

Finally, we need more descriptive data on the role of sex in language. Most laymen will readily admit to differences in speech related to sex, but few, comprehensive studies have dealt with the topic (perhaps due to our failure to view the familiar as unfamiliar). The studies by Fisher (1958), Shuy, Wolfram and Riley (1967), Labov (1966) and Wolfram (1969) give evidence that this is a quite fruitful area for descriptive sociolinguistic studies in the United States, but we need several exhaustive studies showing us the exact ways in which sex differentiation conditions speech behavior across different social groups.

3. Theoretical Issues

Although the explication of theoretical issues is inevitably related to descriptive studies, we may cautiously isolate several outstanding issues which current research on social dialects raises for the linguist. There are, of course, many issues which present studies are also raising for sociologists (e.g. the discreteness of social classes, definition of social roles, etc.) and/or anthropologists, but in this discussion we shall limit ourselves to those problems which deal with central issues in theoretical linguistics.

Perhaps the outstanding problem for the linguist dealing with social variation in language is the way in which observed linguistic variation can be accounted for in a linguistic model of description. Linguistic models of language description are all based on discrete

oppositions vis-à-vis gradience or probability. The question, then, is, do we adopt linguistic models to account for systematic variation (i.e. variation conditioned by social or independent linguistic variables), do we "manipulate" the data in such a way as to fit into the existing framework of linguistic descriptions, or do we describe it apart from any descriptive model of language competence -- a particular type of performance model?

Labov has suggested that regular and uniform structuring of variation is an integral part of language competence whereas Decamp (1969: 1) has insisted that Labov's gradience is an empirical observation of superficial phenomena which can be accounted for by a "combination of discrete oppositions (cf. Fourier analysis of wave phenomena) followed by curve smoothing". Despite DeCamp's somewhat cavalier dismissal of Labov's contention, one must recognize the potential that Labov's variable rule has for linguistic descriptions. Further experimentation with this concept has important implications for the assumption of categoricality in current linguistic models. With reference to current models, we must also ask if there is one current generative model (e.g. transformational versus stratificational) in which gradience can be incorporated more economically than another. Such a question may give us some indication of the explanatory adequacy of grammatical descriptions. We must also investigate to what extent descriptive models hold potential in accounting for other types of structured social factors conditioning language choice. Can we, for example, expect and/or demand that a linguistic model incorporate context sensitive rules whose environment is stated in terms of extra-linguistic factors. Such types of questions that are

raised by sociolinguistic investigations can cause the linguist to reexamine his assumptions concerning language as CODE and BEHAVIOR.

Another area in which current sociolinguistic research may affect theoretical models of language description concerns the extent to which a description can encompass more than an idiolect. The traditional approach of the linguist is to describe the linguistic competence of a single speaker as representative of a given variety of the language. Certain attempts to account for dialect differences by the incorporation of "correspondence" type formalization have been tried (e.g. Cochrane's attempt to formalize Weinreich's diasystem (1959), but their focus on surface realizations make such attempts descriptively inadequate.

Recently, in the work of Bailey (1968, 1969), a more rigorous attempt has been made to account for different varieties of a language from a generative view of language. Bailey has proposed that it is possible to give one underlying representation for all dialects of a given language, the difference between dialects being manifested in the applicability/non-applicability of certain rules. Bailey's "pandialectal" grammar would have rules in their least general form and their marked order, since the more general forms and the unmarked order could be predicted from the other. The first question we must investigate is the feasibility of such an approach for social dialects. And, if such an approach is justifiable, what about varieties of English where different underlying structures would be motivated on independent grounds? Does one sacrifice independent motivation for "overall" descriptive adequacy or are such varieties de facto excluded as different languages? Ultimately, future descriptive statements of social dialects which deal with this matter can give the linguist information about the nature of dialect differences with respect to

the surface and underlying forms of a language.

A further area for the theoretical linguist deals with descriptive differences between several types of language situations. As was mentioned earlier, there are certain apparent similarities between standard English acquisition levels and nonstandard forms. It may also be noted that in language pidginization, certain modifications in a language may arise which also show similarities to levels of acquisition. Furthermore, in language interference of certain types there is an approximation of some adaptations that take place in pidginization. Assuming (and only descriptive studies can tell us if our assumption is correct or not) that there are similarities between these many types of language "modifications", it does not appear that such similarities would be accidental. What we must ask, then, is if there is something inherent within a language system which "predisposes certain types of features for modification" in situations such as acquisition, pidginization and interference. To what extent may we generalize and say that certain aspects of a language are predisposed for modification? (e.g. because of "redundancy" or "functional load")? What aspects may be univeral and what ones language-specific? The relation of research to this theoretical problem may give us important clues to universals of social dialects in relation to linguistic structure.

In addition to the broad theoretical issues raised above, there are more specific issues which future sociolinguistic research can help answer. Several of the outstanding issues are as follows:

(1) What is the role of social factors in historical language change? What implications do they have for speeding up and retarding change and how do such processes operate? (i.e. Further answers to the problem, Labov (1966) and Anshen (1969) attacked).

(2) How does dialect mixture between social dialects contrast and compare with inherent variability within a system. Related to this is the question of how overlapping systems may operate in a speech community or within a single speaker.

(3) How does hypercorrection relate to the linguistic system? That is, to what extent can the type of hypercorrection and the extent of it be predicted on the basis of the language and social system.

(4) What can the study of social dialects tell us about receptive and productive language competence? Does this apply to all dialect differences or only certain structural categories? Is it reciprocal between social dialects?

One could go on about the general and specific implications that future research must have on current theoretical issues in linguistics. What is more important for the linguist, however, is a general approach to sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistic research could simply be understood to mean the description of correlations betwen linguistic and social factors, without reference to any implications that these might have for theoretical problems in

linguistics. Such studies would, no doubt, have great value for a number of reasons. But for the linguist, sociolinguistic studies have greatest relevance when they are specifically designed to solve linguistic problems through an investigation of social factors.

Bibliography

Anshen, Frank. A sociolinguistic analysis of a sound change. Paper presented at the Linguistic Society of America, Champaign, Illinois, July, 1969.

Bailey, Beryl Loftman. Toward a new perspective in Negro English dialectology, American Speech 40, 171-177.

Bailey, C.J.N. The integration of linguistic theory: internal reconstruction and comparative method in descriptive linguistics. Working Papers in Linguistics No 2 (1969) 85-122.

_____. Implicational scales in diachronic linguistics and dialectology, Working Papers in Linguistics No. 8 (1969) 123-137.

Baratz, Joan C. Teaching reading in the Negro school, in Joan C. Baratz and Roger W. Shuy (Eds.), Teaching Black Children to Read. Washington, D.C., Center for Applied Linguistics.

Bereiter, Carl. Academic instruction and preschool children. In Corbin & Crosby(Eds.), Language programs for the disadvantaged. Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965. PP. 195-203.

_____ & Englemann, Siegfried. Teaching disadvantaged children in the preschool. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966.

Billiard, Charles, Arnold Lazarus and Raven McDavid. Dialect features affecting the social mobility and economic opportunties of the disadvantaged in Fort Wayne, Indiana. U.S. Office of Education. Contract No. 9-E011, 1969.

Bright, William. Linguistic change in some Indian caste dialect in Charles A. Ferguson and John Gumperz (Eds.), Linguistic diversity in South Asia. Bloomington, Indiana University, 1960.

_____ Introduction: The dimensions of sociolinguistics, in William Bright (Ed.), Sociolinguistics. The Hague, Mouton & Co., 1966.

Cazden, Courtney B. Subcultural differences in child language: An interdisciplinary review. Merrill Palmer Quarterly, 12 (1966), 185-219.

Chomsky, Noam. Aspects of the theory of syntax. Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, 1965.

_____ Language and Mind. New York, Harcourt, Brace & & World, Inc., 1968.

Cochrane, G.R. The Australian English vowels as a diasystem, Word 15 (1959), 69-88.

DeCamp, David. Toward a generative analysis of a post-Creole speech continuum. Paper presented at the Conference on Pidginization and Creolization of Language,Mona, Jamaica, 1968.

DeCamp, David. Toward a formal theory of sociolinguistics. Unpublished MS, 1969.

Dillard, Joey L. Age-grading in language and culture. Unpublished MS, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1967.

_____. Negro children's dialect in the inner city, The Florida FL Reporter 5(Fall 1967),7-10.

Ervin-Tripp, Susan M. An analysis of the interaction of language, topic and listener, American Anthropologist 66:6, Part2 (1964), 86-102.

_____. Sociolinguistics. Working paper no.3, Language-Behavior Laboratory, University of California, Berkeley, November 1967.

Fasold, Ralph W. A dilemma in sociolinguistic theory. Paper presented at the Linguistic Society of America, Champaign, Illinois, July, 1969.

Fischer, John L. Social influences on the choice of a linguistic variant, Word 14 (1958), 47-56.

Galvan, Mary M. and Troike, Rudolf C. The East Texas Dialect Project. Texas, University of Texas, 1968.

Golden, Ruth I. Effectiveness of instructional tapes for changing regional speech. EdD dissertation, Wayne State University.

Gumperz, John J. Dialect differences and social stratification in a North Indian village, American Anthropologist 60 (1958a), 668-681.

_____. Phonological differences in three Hindi village dialects, Language 34 (1958b), 221-224.

_____. Speech variation and the study of Indian civilization, American Anthropologist 63 (1961), 976-988.

_____. Linguistic and social interaction in two communities, American Anthropologist, 66:6, Part 2 (1964), 137-153.

Hockett, Charles F. Age-grading and linguistic continuity, Language 26 (1950), 449-457.

Hurst, Charles G. Psychological correlates of dialectolalia. Washington, D.C.,1965.

Hymes, Dell H. The ethnography of speaking, in Thomas Gladwin and William C. Sturtevant (Eds.), Anthropology and human behavior. Washington, D.C., Anthropological Society of Washington,1962

Hymes, Dell H. Introduction: Toward ethrographies of communication, American Anthropologist 66:6, Part 2 (1964), 1-34.

Kochman, Thomas. "Rapping" in the black ghetto. Trans-action, February 1969, 26-34.

Kurath, Hans. Handbook of the linguistic geography of New England. Providence: American Council of Learned Societies, 1939.

_____. Linguistic atlas of New England. Providence: American Council of Learned Societies, 1941.

_____. A word geography of the eastern United States. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949.

Labov, William. Phonological indices to social stratification. Paper presented at the American Anthropological Association, San Francisco, 1963a.

_____. The social motivation of a sound change. Word 19 (1963b), 273-309.

_____. On the mechanism of linguistic change. Georgetown University Monograph Series on Language and Linguistics 18 (1965a), 91-114.

_____. Stages in the acquisition of standard English. In Roger W. Shuy (Ed. ) Social dialects and language learning. Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965b, PP. 77-104.

_____. The social stratification of English in New York City. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1966a.

_____. Hypercorrection by the lower middle class as a factor in linguistic evaluation. In William Bright (Ed.), Sociolinguistics. The Hague: Mouton, 1966b, PP. 84-113.

_____. Contraction, deletion, and inherent variation of the English copula. Language 45 (1969).

_____. The logic of non-standard English, Georgetown University Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics 22 (1969).

_____. Cohen, Paul & Robins, Clarence, & Lewis, John. A study of the non-standard English of Negro and Puerto Rican speakers in New York City. Final report. Cooperative Research Project 3288. Office of Education, 1968.

Legum, Stanley E., Williams, Clyde E., & Lee, Maureen T. Social dialects and their implications for beginning reading instruction. Inglewood, Calif. Southwest Regional Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1969.

Loban, Walter D. Problems in oral English. Champaign, Ill., National Council of Teachers of English, 1966.

Loflin, Marvin D. A teaching problem in nonstandard Negro English, English Journal 56 (1967a), 1312-1314.

_____. On the structure of the verb in a dialect of American Negro English. Report No.26, Center for Research in Social Behavior, University of Missouri, 1967b.

_____. Negro nonstandard and standard English: Same or different deep structure? Unpublished paper, Center for Research in Social Behavior, University of Missouri, May 1968.

_____. On the passive in nonstandard Negro English. Journal of English as a Second Language, 4 (Spring 1969), 19-23.

McDavid, Raven I., Jr. Postvocalic r in South Carolina. A social analysis. American Speech 23 (1948), 194-203.

_____. A checklist of significant features for discriminating social dialects. In Eldonna L. Everttts (Ed.), Dimensions of dialect. Champaign, National Council of Teachers of English, 1967. PP. 7-10.

_____. Variations in standard American English. Elementary English 45 (May 1968), 561-564, 608.

_____. & Austin, William M. (Eds.) Communication barriers for the culturally deprived. Cooperative Research Project 2107, Office of Education, 1966.

Menyuk, Paula. Sentences children use. Cambridge, MIT Press, 1969.

Nida, Eugene A. Toward a Science of Translating. Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1964.

Parslow, Robert, Ries, Julie, Bruder, Mary, Wilson, Timothy and Bessko, Melina. Pittsburgh Dialect Project. University of Pittsburgh, 1968.

Pederson, Lee A. The pronunciation of English in metropolitan Chicago. Publication of the American Dialect Society No. 44, University, University of Alabama Press, 1965.

Schmidt, Paul F. Some criticisms of cultural relativism, Journal of Philosophy 52 (1955) 780-791.

Shuy, Roger W., Wolfram, Walter, A. & Riley, William. Linguistic correlates of social stratification in Detroit speech. Final report, Cooperative Research Project 6-1347, U.S. Office of Education, 1967.

_____. Field techniques in an urban language study. Washington, D.C., Center for Applied Linguistics, 1968.

Skinner, D. F. Verbal Behavior. New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957.

Slobin, Dan I. A field manual for cross-cultural study of the acquisition of communicative competence. Berkeley, University of California.

Stewart, William A. Non-standard speech and the teaching of English. Washington, D.C.,Center for Applied Linguistics, 1964.

_____. Sociolinguistic factors in the history of American Negro dialects, The Florida FL Reporter 5 (Spring 1967)11,22,24,26.

_____. Continuity and change in American Negro dialects, The Florida FL Reporter 6 (Spring 1968) 3-4,14-16,18.

Weinreich, Uriel. Is a structural dialectology possible? Word 10 (1954), 388-400.

Williamson, Juanita V. A phonological and morphological study of the speech of the Negro of Memphis. Ann Arbor, PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1961.

Wolfram, Walter A. A sociolinguistic description of Detroit Negro speech. Washington, D.C., Center for Applied Linguistics, 1969.

_____. Linguistic correlates of social differences in the Negro community. Georgetown University Monograph Series on Languages and Linguistics 22 (1969), in press.

_____. Underlying representations in Black English phonology. Paper presented to the Linguistic Society of America, Champaign, Ill., July, 1969.